

## **Maine's Natural Resource-Based Industries: Finding Common Solutions**

### **A. Access to the Natural Resource**

- ❖ **Create a Comprehensive Action Plan to Address the Enormous Pressures that Rising Land Valuations are Placing on Fishing, Farming and Forestry Land Owners** – The Departments of Conservation, Marine Resources and Agriculture should work directly with the State Tax Assessor and Industry Stakeholders to address the critical issues around rising land valuations and the pressure this is exerting on these industries to sell off land. The work of the Working Waterfront Coalition should be considered in these planning efforts.
- ❖ **Strengthen Maine's Service Center Communities to the Fullest Extent Possible as a Primary Strategy for Stemming the Ill-effects of Sprawl on Rural Maine** – The State Planning Office, in developing the Governor's Fiscal Reform and Smart Growth agendas, should explore every avenue of strengthening Maine's Service Centers in an effort to alleviate the tremendous pressure on rural land development.
- ❖ **Develop a Clear Long-term Vision and a Strategic Action Plan for Statewide, Public-Private, Land Conservation and Easements to Assure Multi-Use, Working Forestlands and Lake and Ocean Access-** the Land for Maine's Future Board should work with the Maine Office of Tourism, and the Departments of Agriculture, Conservation and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to develop a long term vision and an accompanying strategic plan for purchasing land in a coordinated fashion. Land purchases which offer extended tourism "pathways or trails" should be given priority. This plan should be developed in collaboration with landowners, tourism regions, recreation user groups, and conservation organizations in framing a strategy for acquisition, management, and promotion of the public's and the land trusts' expanding Northern Forest and Down east Lakes domain. This is critical both for tourism branding and long-term resource conservation.
- ❖ **Reauthorize the Land for Maine's Future program with a new bond issue** – Once the vision and strategic plan are developed, a new bond should be authorized to make strategic land purchases that protect and sustain multi-use forestlands.
- ❖ **Increase public information on "Right to Farm" and "Right to Fish" laws** – The Departments of Agriculture and Marine Resources should work with the Maine Real Estate and Development Association (MEREDA) to raise awareness of these laws and the implications of settling next to working farms and waterfronts.

### **B. Market Development and Branding**

- ❖ **Develop a Comprehensive (“single image”) Branding Campaign for all of Maine’s Natural Resource-Based Industries.** – The Maine Office of Tourism (MOT) should be charged with developing, to the fullest extent possible, one common theme under which all of Maine’s natural resource-based products may be marketed. If one comprehensive brand is found to be unworkable or impractical, the MOT should lead efforts to develop brands for the five industry sectors which will complement and reinforce each other, maximizing the effect of Maine’s limited marketing dollars. A first task for the MOT to undertake is to meet with leaders across all five sectors to identify funding streams to support this critical branding and marketing effort.
- ❖ **Create and Strengthen Links Between Maine Agricultural Entities and Fisheries, and Maine Restaurants** – The Maine Departments of Agriculture and Marine Resources, and the Maine Restaurant Association, in cooperation with the Eat Local Foods Coalition, the Maine Innkeepers Association, the University and the Community College System, should be tasked with developing strong marketing channels that enable Maine restaurants, inns and college campuses to feature Maine food products. This effort should also include outreach to Maine’s government facilities, schools, hospitals, summer camps and other institutions.
- ❖ **Strengthen Maine’s Farmers’ Markets** – The State’s growth management and community planning efforts should work with the Maine Downtown Initiative (a program run by the Maine Development Foundation) to create and support community farmers’ markets in village areas.
- ❖ **Develop and Formalize Strong Working Relationships with Government and Industry in Atlantic Canada** – Strengthen marketing opportunities for natural resource-based products by creating partnerships with neighboring Canadian provinces and exploring joint production and marketing of such products as mussels, lobster, ground fish and salmon, as well as agricultural and forest products.

## **C. Strengthening Small Business Support**

- ❖ **Provide Basic Business Skill Development Programs across all Five Industries** - Charge the University System and the Community College System, in cooperation with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and other entities that deliver services to small entrepreneurial enterprises, to develop a program through which existing training efforts are focused and coordinated, unmet needs are identified, and new outreach programs are created to serve this vital need.
- ❖ **Develop Comprehensive Apprenticeship and Mentoring Programs for all of the Natural Resource-based Industries** - Charge the Department of Labor, in partnership with Maine’s Community College System, the State’s secondary-level Vocational-Technical Centers, the University, and industry experts, with leading this effort to identify, train, mentor and encourage young

people to pursue such professions as logging contractors, farming, or aquaculture.

- ❖ **Build on the successful 2+2+2 Programs that Offer an Educational Ladder from High School through the University** – The University, Community College System and the Department of Education should develop a number of natural resource tracts that can equip young people with the entrepreneurial, business and technical skills they need to succeed in these industries and to enable them to reach their highest potential in formalized education. (see recommendation under “Clear, Predictable Public Policy”)
- ❖ **Develop Affordable Group Health, Dental and Long-term Care Insurance Options** – Form and empower an inter-industry organization or a formalized inter-agency team to secure and provide reasonably-priced insurances for the small businesses across all of these industry sectors.
- ❖ **Access Adequate Seasonal Labor** – Develop a program (or build on existing programs) that identifies, screens, and secures appropriate domestic and foreign workers to fill seasonal jobs during peak tourist season and key agricultural harvesting periods.
- ❖ **Develop Affordable Workers’ Compensation Insurance Options** – Form and empower an inter-industry organization or a formalized inter-agency team to secure and provide reasonably-priced workers’ compensation insurance for the small businesses across all of these industry sectors.
- ❖ **Develop Personal Savings and Investment Plan Options for these Sectors** – Form and empower an inter-industry organization or a formalized inter-agency team to secure and provide technical assistance for long term savings and investment planning for the small business people across all of these industry sectors.
- ❖ **Facilitate the Development of Cooperative/Aggregated Purchasing Options** - Form and empower an inter-industry organization or a formalized inter-agency team to secure and provide for aggregated electricity purchases, heating and transportation fuel bulk purchases, and other commodity cooperative purchases for the small businesses across all of these industry sectors.
- ❖ **Develop and Implement a Strategy for Identifying Best Practices in each of the Five Sectors** - Charge the University of Maine’s Cooperative Extension Program with leading this effort, using existing channels to get information and training opportunities out to the sectors.

## **D. Objective Data, Research and Science for Policymaking**

- ❖ **Encourage the Development of a Natural Resource Research and Development Agenda in Maine’s University System** – The Governor and Legislature should ask the University System to explore the opportunities for developing a research agenda that would support the ongoing health and viability of Maine’s natural resource-based industries. This agenda should lay out plans and incentives for encouraging faculty, graduate and under-graduate

research to focus on issues that are of major concern to Maine industry. The plan should also examine the potential for endowed chairs or centers for research on relevant topics. And, to the fullest extent possible, math, statistics and economics classes should be given real life, Maine-based problems to solve to heighten the awareness of students to the issues faced by Maine businesses and to contribute information and data to Maine industry.

- ❖ **Establish a Bachelors and Masters Degree Program in Hospitality and Tourism**– Development of these degree programs within the University System and the Community College System should be done in consultation with the Maine Office of Tourism and industry stakeholders. The degree, research, and extension programs will also seek to enhance economic linkages between the tourism industry and fisheries, aquaculture, agriculture, and forestry, as well as with the creative economy. In addition, a high-level center of ongoing basic and applied tourism research with a related extension program should be established within the university system. The research and extension program will provide market and product information and technical assistance to Maine’s tourism industry.
- ❖ **Increase the State Planning Office’s Capacity to Provide Technical Assistance to Municipalities Seeking Tourism Industry Growth**– Assistance should be provided in the form of tools to assess industry economic, social and environmental benefits and costs, to determine carrying capacity limits, and to encourage industry growth accordingly. The emphasis of the technical assistance provided should respect the interests of the local municipality.

## **E. Clear, Predictable Public Policy**

- ❖ **Develop a Clear, Comprehensive, Balanced Natural Resource Policy for Maine** – The State Planning Office should be charged with leading a coordinated visioning process (which includes representatives of each industry, environmental concerns and academic institutions and takes into account information coming out of this conference) which results in a clearly articulated vision for Maine’s natural resource-based industries and goals within and across these sectors to move us towards that vision.
- ❖ **Establish a Benchmarking Process Modeled After or Incorporated into the Maine Economic Growth Council’s Annual *Measures of Growth* Report** – The Measures of Growth benchmarking process has provided Maine leaders with an invaluable tool for identifying issue areas across the economy.
- ❖ **Create a Standing Council (modeled after the Growth Council) to Review Annual Benchmarking Results and Recommend Policy or Program Changes to Keep Maine on Track** – To move Maine towards our vision, some entity must be charged with tracking progress, identifying issue or opportunity areas, and making appropriate course corrections. (The State Planning Office or the Maine Economic Growth Council could play this role).
- ❖ **Request that the Higher Education Joint Advisory Committee (HEJAC) Review Existing and New Articulation Agreements and Explore New**

**Academic Programs which Support Maine's Natural Resource-Based Industries: Fishing, Farming, Forestry, Aquaculture and Tourism.** - The Higher Education Joint Advisory Committee (HEJAC), a committee created by the Chancellor of the University of Maine System and the President of Maine's Community College System, is made up of three Presidents from each System. The purpose of the HEJAC is to support both Systems in their collaborative work to address college aspirations, to develop systems which encourage student admissions and transfer, to encourage cost savings and to share best practices.

- ❖ **Develop a Clear, Comprehensive, Balanced Policy for Uses of Maine's Coast and Coastal Waters.** – The Department of Marine Resources and the Office of Tourism, augmented with outside stakeholder representation and building on the work of the Aquaculture and Ground Fish Task Forces, should be charged with developing an explicit set of policies which are substantive, balance a diversity of interests and include clear guidelines and performance standards. Divergent interests must be at the table such as aquaculture, tourism, commercial fishing, and coastal residents and business owners.
- ❖ **Post an Updated List of "Current Efforts Underway" on a Central, Natural Resource Web Site** – The State Planning Office should develop and monitor a web-based listing of all efforts underway to ensure that ground-level policy development is open to all interested parties.

## **F. Tax Policy and Economic Development Incentives**

- ❖ **Eliminate the Personal Property Tax on Machinery and Equipment for Investments Made After April 2004** – In an effort to encourage capital investment in these and all related industries, this tax should be eliminated prospectively.
- ❖ **Examine the Potential for Extending Pine Tree Zone Benefits to Natural Resource-based Businesses Which May Need to Locate Outside the Specified Zones** – The Department of Economic and Community Development should examine the potential for providing these incentives to businesses outside the zones if that business needs to be close to the natural resource or if the development of that business would strongly support natural resource-based businesses which are located in the zone.
- ❖ **Develop a Comprehensive Plan for Reducing Energy Costs Across all Industries** – The Energy Resources Council should be charged with developing a long-term plan for reducing energy costs, developing renewable resources powered by the waste stream in these natural resource-based industries, and investing in efficiencies to reduce energy consumption and emissions.
- ❖ **Improve Access to Technology and Financial Assistance by Taking Development Resources to the Regions** – The Department of Economic and Community Development, in partnership with the Departments of Conservation, Agriculture and Marine Resources, the Maine Technology Institute, the Maine International Trade Center, the Finance Authority of

Maine (FAME), Coastal Enterprises, Inc. (CEI), the Federal Agencies and individual industry leadership, should establish a business management and assistance seminar program which travels to different regions of the state through the course of the year.

- ❖ **Develop a Regulatory Support System Infrastructure for all Small Businesses in these Industries** – The State Planning Office, in partnership with each of the natural resource agencies, the Department of Economic and Community Development and the Department of Environmental Protection, should lead an evaluation of the regulatory burdens faced by businesses in these sectors and should develop a pro-active program that eliminates and streamlines regulations that are within the State's control and that updates and informs Maine's businesses about regulatory changes and potential compliance issues.
- ❖ **Develop Working Waterfront Legislation to Protect and Promote the Commercial Activities Along Maine's Coast** – The Working Waterfront Coalition should be asked to develop a comprehensive policy agenda detailing necessary access, land-use, and tax policies along with financing programs to keep Maine's working waterfront vibrant.
- ❖ **Establish Meaningful Development Incentives to Encourage Private Sector Tourism Industry Investment in Targeted Areas** – The Maine Office of Tourism should be charged with developing targeted incentives using the Pine Tree Zones. There are numerous incentive opportunities and opportunity zones for other industry development interests; similar offerings should be made available to tourism businesses if expansion into the underdeveloped areas of the state is to be realized.
- ❖ **Study the Potential Elimination or Reduction of the Sales Tax for Diesel Fuel Consumed on Fishing Vessels and in Logging Operations.**

## **G. Coordination/Collaboration across Industries & Govt. Agencies**

- ❖ **Empower an Inter-industry Team to Develop a Long-term Vision and Strategies to Attain that Vision of Developing Productive, Multi-use Forests** – The Office of Tourism should work with the Department of Conservation and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to develop a long-term plan for identifying eco-tourism and cultural tourism assets, directly linking the outdoor recreation and tourism industries with Maine's green forest and forest products industry, and encouraging partnerships with landowners for specialized recreational activities.
- ❖ **Empanel a group of dynamic, natural resource-based industry leaders and other action-oriented thinkers to network and to ensure that Maine is moving towards the vision** – Strengthening the connections among industry leaders of all of these industries and establishing a framework for action-oriented, positive discussion will bolster the coordination and collaboration going forward.
- ❖ **Challenge the Ground Fish Task Force, the Aquaculture Task Force and Other Fishing Industry Groups to Work Together with the Department**

**of Marine Resources in Developing a Multi-Use Policy Agenda for Maine's Marine Resources** – The various sectors in fisheries and aquaculture should be brought together to work out whatever differences they may have and to develop a common vision and development plan for Maine's coastal waters.

- ❖ **Formalize the work of the Blaine House Conference on Natural Resource-based Industries Planning Committee into a standing advisory committee to the Governor** - to ensure and strengthen cross-industry coordination in the future. In addition to formalizing the committee's role, broaden its membership to include appropriate private sector representation from each of the major industry groups.

## **H. Public Infrastructure**

- ❖ **Support the implementation of the Maine Department of Transportation's Integrated Freight Plan.** - This plan calls for the development of a multimodal approach to moving goods into and throughout Maine by trucks, rail, and ships. This Plan includes the Maine DOT's Three Port Strategy to focus marine infrastructure investments in Eastport, Searsport, and Portland.
- ❖ **Support the implementation of the Maine Department of Transportation's *Explore Maine* passenger transportation plan.** - This plan calls for the development of an integrated, multimodal approach for moving visitors and residents into and throughout Maine with out dependence on the private automobile. *Explore Maine* calls for public and private investments to support rail, marine, bus and air transportation, as well as bicycling and pedestrian trails.
- ❖ **Support the Construction of Publicly-Owned and Operated Warehousing Facilities in Portland** – In the short term, the Legislature should support a \$3 million bond to build a second warehousing facility at the Port of Portland.
- ❖ **Enhance the DOT Long-Term Plan by Including a Strategic Plan for Developing and Maintaining Public Warehousing Capacity.**
- ❖ **Increase the Development and Placement of Historical and Interpretive Signage** – Signage should be developed to encourage tourists to visit Maine's farmer's markets, farm stands and eco-tourism sights.